



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2017

Hudson Highlands Land Trust Receives Hudson River Grants for Projects on Both Sides of the River

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) was recently awarded two separate grants for important conservation work on both sides of the Hudson River: \$15,000 from the Hudson River Valley Greenway for public access improvements to its Granite Mountain Preserve in Putnam Valley (Putnam County), and \$49,300 from New York's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Hudson River Estuary Program to assist the Towns of Cornwall and Blooming Grove (Orange County) prepare Open Space Inventories.

HHLT acquired the 358-acre Granite Mountain Preserve earlier this year, and partnered with the Department of Geography and Engineering at West Point Military Academy to map out a trail network on Granite Mountain. With the Greenway funding, HHLT will be able to enter the next phase of improvements to establish a parking area and build a kiosk, providing access from Peekskill Hollow Road. In addition, the Preserve is being designated a Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System, bringing more attention to the unique recreational resources of Putnam Valley.

The DEC grant supports HHLT's assistance to the Towns of Cornwall and Blooming Grove in preparing Open Space Inventories (OSIs), in partnership Orange County Land Trust (OCLT). Open Space Inventories are valuable tools for guiding a desirable balance between development and conservation. Building on work that HHLT has been doing with Philipstown over the past decade – namely, supporting the development and update of Philipstown's OSI – HHLT, in partnership with the Orange County Land Trust, will now bring these practices and procedures to establishing OSIs in Cornwall and Blooming Grove.

The grant awards come at a time of increasing development pressure and demands on water resources across the Hudson Highlands region. The Granite Mountain Preserve protects several hundred acres in southern Putnam Valley and the water supply that many families rely on. The OSIs in Cornwall and Blooming Grove will document the areas of those towns that are most important to residents for conservation and for protection of their water resources.

Putnam Valley Supervisor Sam Oliverio said earlier this year "The greatest prize is the preservation of our Town's aquifer that runs under the base of Granite Mountain. That water is the supplier of many of our wells and is a most cherished resource that must be conserved."

With the support of the Hudson River Valley Greenway grant, residents will now also be able to enjoy the recreational opportunities offered by the Preserve.

Of the Open Space Inventory project in Orange County, Cornwall Supervisor Richard Randazzo said, “We are very pleased to receive the Hudson River Estuary Grant to create an Open Space Inventory that will provide vital information to support our comprehensive planning and help to educate the public on related issues such as protecting our water resources, farmlands, scenic beauty and recreational opportunities.”

“We are delighted to be able to further our conservation work and facilitate public access with these two grants,” said Michelle Smith, Executive Director of the Hudson Highlands Land Trust. “Partnering with the Greenway and the Town, we will be able to enhance opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in Putnam Valley. We also look forward to expanding our work with municipalities on open space planning to the west side of our beautiful Hudson Highlands. The Blooming Grove and Cornwall areas share many natural treasures including the Moodna Creek watershed, and Schunemunk Mountain and its surrounding territory.”

The Hudson River Valley Greenway announced a total of \$285,000 in trail grants on October 18. Funding for the grants is provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, Hudson River Valley Greenway Conservancy.

The DEC announced a total of more than \$650,000 in grants on October 12, for projects that include providing river access, watershed planning, and natural resource protection across the Hudson River estuary. Funding for the grants is provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program.

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the natural resources, rural character, and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands. Those wishing more information may contact the Hudson Highlands Land Trust at 845-424-3358 or visit www.hhlt.org.

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